

Storm hits close to home

Meteorology graduate student witnesses hurricane's fury

By KARI ROY

Special to the Battalion

Last week, hurricane Andrew ravaged southern Florida destroying over 80,000 homes and leaving behind it a trail of devastation, with damages up to \$30 billion, and \$10 to 20 million in additional property loss.

During the storm, Chris Samsury, a meteorology graduate student at Texas A&M, was in Coral Gables, Florida, at the National Hurricane Center working on meteorological research.

"I planned the trip weeks in advance, I wasn't expecting the storm," Samsury said.

During the hurricane, Samsury stayed on the sixth floor of the 14-story Hurricane Center building, a structure designed to withstand extreme weather conditions.

"The building itself didn't take much damage, but they lost all their radar, two satellite dishes and most of the instruments that were on the roof," Samsury said.

"We had a wind gauge going during the storm, and it's last reading before it blew away was 160 mph."

After the storm passed, Samsury traveled with three scientists from the center to do an informal damage assessment in the Miami area.

"The devastation was unbelievable. Every mile the damage got worse," Samsury said.

During hurricane Andrew, Samsury was exposed to the heart of his research, collecting emotional as well as statistical information.

"When you do academic research you're removed from your subject," he said. "You do your report and move on."

"I find hurricanes to be scientifically fascinating, but when you get to talk to people and see their homes destroyed- you just can't explain it."

Samsury had friends in Florida who lost everything they owned.

"People who haven't seen it firsthand don't understand," he said. "They don't realize what went on."

Track applies for upgraded license

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Trinity Meadows Raceway, which has been operating as a Class 2 horse racing track since May 1991, Monday was recommended for a highly sought Class 1 racing license for the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Trinity Meadows is one of four groups seeking the license, which state racing officials say is the largest and most lucrative left in North America.

Racing Commission executive secretary David Freeman said the formal proposal for a decision was made by administrative law judge Dudley McCalla, who conducted hearings in June.

McCalla's recommendation now goes to the horse section of the Texas Racing Commission, which is scheduled to meet in early October. Sept. 21 is the earliest the panel could act, Freeman said.

Racing Commission spokeswoman Jean Cook said it wasn't yet certain when the commission would consider the license recommendation. The commission can accept, reject or modify McCalla's proposal.

She said each applicant for the permit has 10 days to file objections to the proposal, plus another seven days to respond to those.

The Racing Commission staff had previously said that Pinnacle and Trinity Meadows were not qualified to receive a Class 1 pari-

mutuel wagering license. "It was my opinion that given the problems we have had with regulatory compliance" and questions about Trinity Meadows' site, Freeman said Monday, "I felt that they were not, did not, warrant a Class 1 license."

He also said he planned to file comments within the next 10 days about the license proposal.

State racing law limits the Kentucky Derby-style Class 1 tracks to the areas around Texas' three largest cities.

The Racing Commission already has granted licenses to Sam Houston Race Park for a Class 1 track in Houston and to Retama Park for the Class 1 track in the San Antonio area, Cook said.

Agency to protect victims of abuse

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — The doors open this week at the state's newest agency, one designed to protect children, the elderly and disabled from abuse.

The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service with a \$380 million budget, will draw its nearly 5,600 staff from two other agencies — the Texas Department of Human Services and the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental

Retardation.

The Legislature created the agency to bring more impartiality to abuse investigations and more vigor to services designed to protect vulnerable people.

"If we can do anything to prevent or cut down on the amount of abuse that is occurring to children, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable Texans... I will consider that a great accomplishment," said Camille Miller, PRS' interim executive director. "I won't consider it a success until we have significantly

made an impact."

The agency's creation was mandated by a federal court pact that settled a long-running lawsuit against the state over the care of the mentally retarded.

Although the agency isn't officially open until Tuesday, Miller and the agency's six-member governing board have been working in the wings.

Last week, \$1 million in unused DHS money was spent on computers and software for abuse investigators.

Officials seek preventive measures

Heat affects cyclists in race

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WICHITA FALLS — With four deaths in four years, officials of the Hotter'N Hell Hundred, the nation's second largest bike ride, said Monday they were looking over data to determine whether any were preventable.

Enrique McLean, 45, of Houston, and Siegfried Mosemann, 51, of Wichita Falls, collapsed during the ride Saturday and died at area hospitals.

"This was somewhat of a shock to us," said Dr. Brian Hull, one of the medical advisors for Hotter'N Hell. "We go to great length on this ride to educate the public."

The event attracted 11,334 riders this year, including 888 who raced competitively. Only Milwaukee's Miller Lite Ride For the Arts, draws

more riders, about 13,000.

In 1991, Lowell Riggs, 47, of Texarkana, Ark. collapsed and died while riding in the event. An autopsy later showed Riggs had an undetected congenital heart disease.

In 1989, a Kansas man who had bypass surgery rode in the 50-mile portion of the event against doctor's orders. He died shortly after finishing.

"In the past we've changed our starting line because of too many accidents," said Roby Christie, chairman of the annual event. "There is always more to learn and one thing is our medical committee is never satisfied. We are going to get better."

Hotter'N Hell is a favorite among cyclists. Held each year nine days before Labor Day, the event attracts riders of all ages and abilities. Ride officials offer several seminars on heat exhaustion to the public.

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